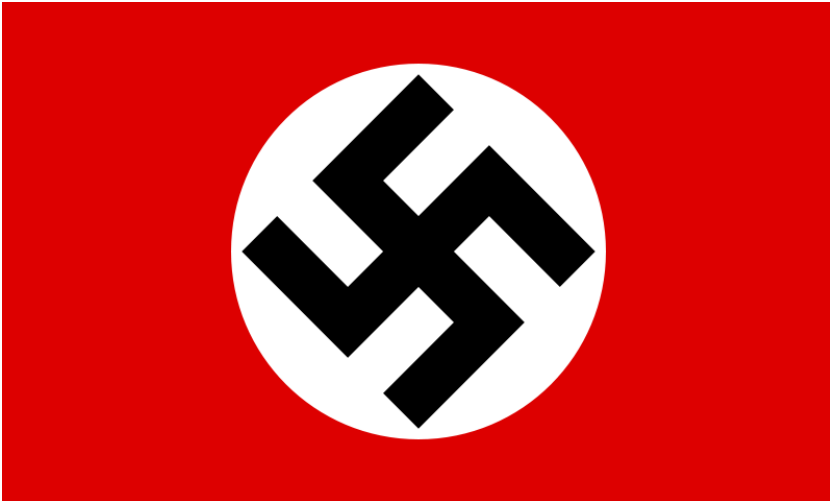


*January 20, 1933: Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany*



Prior to the 1930s, the swastika (“SWASS-tih-kah”) was a near-universal symbol of good luck. Appropriated as a symbol by the Nazi Party in Germany, and used on the German flag during Nazi rule, it has since become associated worldwide with racism, anti-Semitism (hatred of Jewish people), and genocide.

*The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the [German] Nazi regime and its collaborators [before and during World War II]. "Holocaust" is a word of Greek origin meaning "sacrifice by fire." The Nazis, who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were "racially superior" and that the Jews, deemed "inferior," were an alien threat to the so-called German racial community.*

*During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived "racial inferiority": Roma (Gypsies), the disabled, and some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others). Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, and behavioral grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and homosexuals.*

*In 1933, the Jewish population of Europe stood at over nine million. Most European Jews lived in countries that Nazi Germany would occupy or influence during World War II. By 1945, the Germans and their collaborators killed nearly two out of every three European Jews as part of the "Final Solution," the Nazi policy to murder the Jews of Europe.*

*August 2, 1934: Hitler becomes "Führer" ("Leader") -- effectively, a dictator with absolute power*

Born in Austria in 1889, [Hitler] served in the German army during World War I. [H]e blamed the Jews for the country's defeat in 1918. Soon after the war ended, Hitler joined the National German Workers' Party, which became the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), known to English speakers as the Nazis. While imprisoned... Hitler wrote the memoir and propaganda tract "Mein Kampf" (My Struggle), in which he predicted a general European war that would result in "the extermination of the Jewish race in Germany." Hitler was obsessed with the idea of the superiority of the "pure" German race, which he called "Aryan," and with the need for "Lebensraum," or living space, for that race to expand. In the decade after he was released from prison, Hitler took advantage of the weakness of his rivals to enhance his party's status and rise from obscurity to power.



*November 9/10, 1938: Kristallnacht (nationwide pogrom in Germany)*



Jewish-owned storefronts after Kristallnacht.

**[In Nazi Germany,] Jews became routine targets for stigmatization and persecution. This culminated in Kristallnacht, or the "night of broken glass" in November 1938, when German synagogues were burned and windows in Jewish shops were smashed; some 100 Jews were killed and thousands more arrested. From 1933 to 1939, hundreds of thousands of Jews who were able to leave Germany did, while those who remained lived in a constant state of uncertainty and fear.**

*September 1, 1939: Germany invades Poland, starting World War II in Europe*

**Huge Nazi rallies and symbolic acts such as the public burning of books by Jews, Communists, liberals and foreigners helped drive home the desired message of party strength.**



Nazi book-burning rally. Texts found distasteful by the Nazi Party -- either because of their content or authorship -- were burned in celebratory bonfires.



Hitler Youth parade (the Nazi equivalent of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, membership was required of German children). (Images on this page from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum)

September 1939: Germany occupies all of Poland

**In September 1939, the German army occupied the western half of Poland. German police soon forced tens of thousands of Polish Jews from their homes and into ghettos, giving their confiscated properties to ethnic Germans (non-Jews outside Germany who identified as German), Germans from the Reich or Polish gentiles. Surrounded by high walls and barbed wire, the Jewish ghettos in Poland functioned like captive city-states, governed by Jewish Councils. In addition to widespread unemployment, poverty and hunger, overpopulation made the ghettos breeding grounds for disease such as typhus.**



Left: Child in the Warsaw Ghetto



Right: *Entrance to the Warsaw ghetto. The sign states: "Epidemic Quarantine Area: Only Through Traffic is Permitted." Warsaw, Poland, February 1941.*

*Images on this page from the website of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum*

*June 22, 1941: Germany invades the Soviet Union*

The German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 marked a new level of brutality in warfare. Mobile killing units called Einsatzgruppen [INE-sahtz-groo-en"] would murder more than 500,000 Soviet Jews and others (usually by shooting) over the course of the German occupation.



Left: A young mother and her two children sit among a large group of Jews from Lubny [in the USSR] who have been assembled for mass execution on October 16, 1941.



Right: German soldiers of the Waffen-SS and the Reich Labor Service look on as a member of *Einsatzgruppe* D prepares to shoot a Ukrainian Jew kneeling on the edge of a mass grave filled with the bodies of previous victims. [The man was shot immediately after the photo was taken.]

*Photo credits: Library of Congress, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives (from the University of South Florida website)*

*September, 1941: Jews in German-occupied territories are required to wear yellow Stars of David whenever they go outside.*



**A memorandum dated July 31, 1941, from Hitler's top commander Hermann Goering to Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the SD (the security service of the SS), referred to the need for an Endlösung (Final Solution) to "the Jewish question." Beginning in September 1941, every person designated as a Jew in German-held territory was marked with a yellow star, making them open targets. Tens of thousands were soon being deported to the Polish ghettos and German-occupied cities in the USSR.**

*December 7, 1941: Japan bombs Pearl Harbor and the U.S. declares war the next day*

*December 8, 1941: The first killing operations begin at Chelmno in occupied Poland*

*December 11, 1941: Nazi Germany declares war on the United States*

**Since June 1941, experiments with mass killing methods had been ongoing at the concentration camp of Auschwitz, near Krakow [in Poland]. That August, 500 officials gassed 500 Soviet POWs to death with the pesticide Zyklon-B. The SS soon placed a huge order for the gas with a German pest-control firm, an ominous indicator of the coming Holocaust.**



Interior of a gas chamber at the Majdanek (“MY-dah-nek”) death camp. The walls are stained from the use of Zyklon-B, a chemical pesticide (insect killer), as poison gas.

*Late 1941 -- Spring 1942: deportation of Polish Jews from their homes to concentration camps; Nazis begin to use gas chambers as instruments of mass murder.*

**Beginning in late 1941, the Germans began mass transports from the ghettos in Poland to the concentration camps, starting with those people viewed as the least useful: the sick, old and weak and the very young. The first mass gassings began at the camp of Belzec, near Lublin, on March 17, 1942. Five more mass killing centers were built at camps in occupied Poland, including Chelmno, Sobibor, Treblinka, Majdanek and the largest of all, Auschwitz-Birkenau.**



A view of the exterior of Auschwitz from the rail tracks entering the camp. Victims traveling on inbound trains, if not young, healthy, and selected for work detail, could be stripped of their clothes and belongings and gassed to death within 15 minutes of arrival. A striking and horrifying feature of the Holocaust is that the Nazis applied the technology and idea of the modern industrial assembly line to their acts of genocide -- attempts to wipe out an entire races or groups of people. Killing centers, such as that at the Auschwitz concentration camp, were literally factories of death.

*January 18-22, 1943: SS and police units deport approximately 6,500 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka killing center, and shoot another nearly 1,400 Jews in the ghetto. Members of the Jewish Fighting Organization... resist the actions of the SS and police with armed force.*

*April 19-May 16, 1943: In what is called the Warsaw ghetto uprising, Jewish fighters resist the German attempt to liquidate the ghetto. German SS and police units shoot approximately 7,000 Jews during the suppression of the uprising and deport another 7,000 of those who survive the armed revolt to Treblinka [another death camp]... Some resistance fighters escape from the ghetto and join partisan groups in the forests around Warsaw. The Warsaw ghetto uprising is the first armed revolt of civilians in German-occupied Europe.*



Prisoners arriving at Auschwitz by train. The vast majority of the people in this photograph would not leave the camp alive.

*June 6, 1944: D-Day: Allied forces invade Normandy, France*



The Nazis identified concentration camp prisoners by numbers tattooed on their arms. Survivors still bear their tattoos today.



Piles of suitcases and wedding rings confiscated from deportees to Auschwitz. Gold and jewels were turned over to the Nazi government.

**At Auschwitz alone, more than 2 million people were murdered in a process resembling a large-scale industrial operation. A large population of Jewish and non-Jewish inmates worked in the labor camp there; though only Jews were gassed, thousands of others died of starvation or disease. During the summer of 1944, even as the events of D-Day (June 6, 1944) and a Soviet offensive the same month spelled the beginning of the end for Germany in the war, a large proportion of Hungary's Jewish population was deported to Auschwitz, and as many as 12,000 Jews were killed every day.**

*August 1, 1944: Warsaw Polish uprising begins* [Polish people, Jewish and non-, rebel against the Nazi occupation]



Exterior of a crematorium (building for burning bodies) at Auschwitz. Once the killing centers were established, it became inefficient for the Nazis to bury the bodies of their victims, even in large pits, and large crematoria were built by the SS (armed branch of the Nazi party) at each site. Smoke and human ash rising from the chimneys made the camps look even more like factories.

*August 25, 1944: Liberation of Paris* [from German control]

As the Allies advance into German-held territory from the east and west, the Nazi government speeds up its efforts to exterminate those it has deemed undesirable.



Interior of a crematorium at Auschwitz. Human bodies were slid into the ovens by able-bodied prisoners, who were forced to assist in the operation of the camp. In his book *Night*, Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel records at least one young man having to place the body of his own father into the ovens.

*January 18, 1945: Death march of nearly 60,000 prisoners from the Auschwitz camp system in southern Poland*

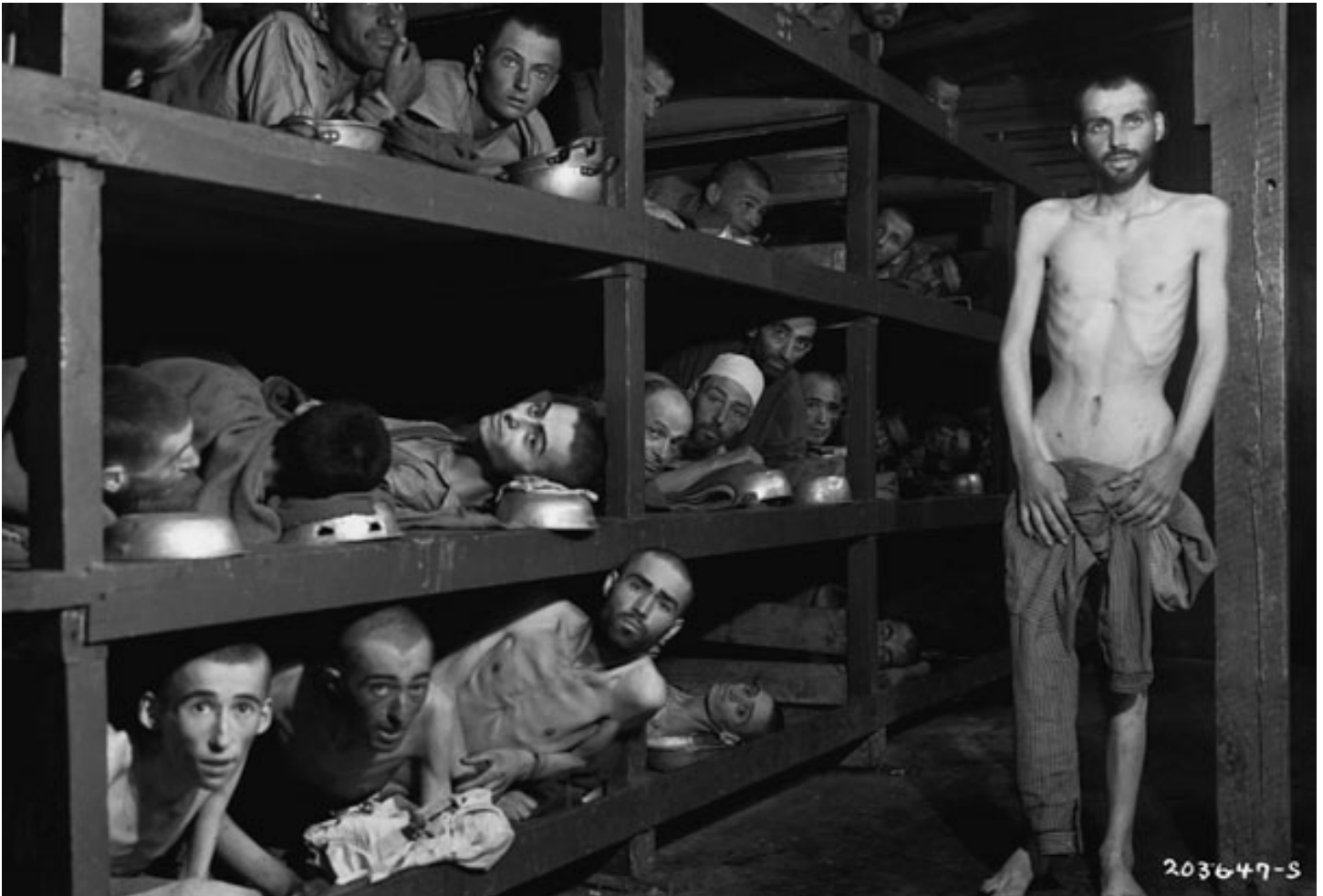
Rather than surrender and let their captives be freed, the Nazi SS guards running death camps forced prisoners to march long distances non-stop in retreats from the front lines. Already malnourished and under-clothed, many victims died from starvation, dehydration, exhaustion, and exposure to the cold.

*January 27, 1945: Soviet troops liberate the Auschwitz camp complex*



The gates of Auschwitz. "Arbeit macht frei", literally "work makes free" in German, is usually translated into English as "labor liberates" or "work makes you free".

*April 29, 1945: American forces liberate the Dachau concentration camp*



Above is a picture taken by Allied soldiers following the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1945. Elie Wiesel, Nobel Prize winner and author of the autobiographical novel *Night*, about his experience as a young man in the Holocaust, is seventh from the left on the second bunk from the bottom. (Note: prisoners were kept for some time in the camps after their liberation by Allied forces, so that their diets and health could be monitored; many of them had no homes or family to return to.)

*April 30, 1945: Adolf Hitler commits suicide*

*May 7, 1945: Germany surrenders to the western Allies*

*May 9, 1945: Germany surrenders to the Soviets*



Berlin, the capital of Germany, in ruins.

**In his last will and political testament, dictated in a German bunker that April 29, Hitler blamed the war on "International Jewry and its helpers" and urged the German leaders and people to follow "the strict observance of the racial laws and with merciless resistance against the universal poisoners of all peoples" -- the Jews. The following day, he committed suicide. Germany's formal surrender in World War II came barely a week later, on May 8, 1945.**

Warm-up (2 points per section):

1. What do you *know*, or *think you know*, about the Holocaust -- the Nazi persecution of and attempt to exterminate the Jews of Europe before and during WWII? (list as many things as you can)


2. What do you *not yet know*, or what would you *like to know*, about the Holocaust? (see if you can come up with 6 questions)


Gallery Walk Directions: For each dated station (look at the top of the posted sheet of paper), there are 2-3 questions. Answer each question as you move from date to date.

January 20, 1933

1. Where have you seen a swastika before (if at all)? What, if any, reaction have you had?

2. List 3 other groups of people persecuted by the Nazis besides the Jews:

- a.
- b.
- c.

August 2, 1934

3. What was Hitler's title as absolute dictator in Germany, and what did this word mean?
4. What term did Hitler use to describe German "race" of people?
5. What did this race need, according to him? (note: this would have ultimately required the extermination of all of the Slavic peoples of eastern Europe and the western USSR, and not only the Jews).

November 9/10, 1938

6. What do you think the word "pogrom" means?
7. If you were a Jew living in Germany during Kristallnacht, do you think you would have tried to leave the country? Why or why not?

September 1, 1939

8. Many German citizens enjoyed attending the bonfires and contributing books to burn. Why do you think this might have been?
9. How might required participation of children in the Hitler Youth have helped cement the loyalty of adults to the Nazi Party?

September, 1939

10. Write a definition for the word "ghetto" as it seems to have been applied in Nazi-controlled Poland.
11. Write a definition for the word "ghetto" as you use it today.
12. What do these two definitions have in common?

June 22, 1941

13. What is the German word for “mobile killing unit”?

14. At least one, and quite possibly both, of the photos on this page were taken by German soldiers or government photographers. During the war in Iraq, a few American soldiers infamously took pictures of themselves with Iraqi prisoners posed in humiliating poses. Why might soldiers, or government officials, document atrocities (“horrible acts”) that they themselves are responsible for?

15. How does knowing that the subjects in these photographs were about to die change the way you look at them?

September, 1941

16. The word “Holocaust” was not used to describe the Nazis’ attempt to exterminate the Jews of Europe until after WWII. In Hebrew (the language of Judaism, and of the nation of Israel), the word used is “Shoah” (“catastrophe”). What term did the Germans use themselves? (Write its English meaning).

December 7-11, 1941

17. Auschwitz is the most famous of the Nazi concentration camps for Jews and other people the Nazis deemed undesirable, and one of the largest. What present-day country is it located in?

18. What was the name of the poison used in the gas chambers?

19. Why do you think the Nazis might have been attracted to gas chambers as a means of killing people?

Late 1941 - Spring 1942

20. Why were the old, the sick, and the young selected for death first, rather than healthy adults? (How might the able-bodied have been useful to the Nazis, rather than a threat?)

21. What did Auschwitz and other death camps have in common with factories (if you need a hint, see June 6, 1944)?

January 18-22, 1943

22. In what Polish city did Jewish civilians resist the Nazis by force?

23. If you were one of the people pictured in this photograph, how do you think you would have felt as you disembarked from the crowded train? (historical note: these were cattle cars packed full of people, not passenger cars)

June 6, 1944

24. What significant event happened on this date?

25. What can you infer or guess about the experience of people who were held or killed in camps, based on any or all of these three pictures?

August 1, 1944

26. Why did the Germans build crematoria at the death camps?

27. Which way do the barbed wire fences curl -- inward or outward? What can you tell about their purpose from this?

August 25, 1944

28. Why would the liberation of Paris from Nazi control have been a significant event in WWII? (Why is Paris an important city?)

29. What reason(s) could the Germans have had for killing more and more people even as they started to lose the war?

30. Who is the author of the memoir *Night*?

January 18, 1945

31. Which sounds like a worse death to you -- meeting your end in a gas chamber, or on a forced march in the middle of winter? How come?

32. Record the German phrase over the gates of Auschwitz *and* one of its English translations.

April 29, 1945

33. Look closely at Elie Wiesel's face, or at that of any other prisoner. What thoughts do you think might be going through his mind as this picture was taken?

34. On arriving at the first concentration camp he visited, four star general and future US president Dwight Eisenhower vomited in disgust and horror, and then wrote:

*I have never felt able to describe my emotional reaction when I first came face to face with indisputable evidence of Nazi brutality and ruthless disregard of every shred of decency...I visited every nook and cranny of the camp because I felt it my duty to be in a position from then on to testify at first hand about these things in case there ever grew up at home the belief or assumption that the stories of Nazi brutality were just propaganda. (text from <http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/people/liberato.htm>)*

What do you think would have been your reaction?

April 30, 1945

35. Whom did Hitler blame the war on?

36. Why might Hitler have committed suicide, rather than surrender or continue the fight?

37. Allied forces often forced German citizens of nearby towns to view the remains of the dead in concentration camps before giving them a proper burial. Do you think this was an appropriate thing to do? Why or why not?